

Testimony on House Bill 5796. Heidi Kattula, Ed.D.

Thank you Chairman Kesto, and members of the committee for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Heidi Kattula, I am the Executive Director of District and School Services at Oakland Schools and I am speaking in support of House Bill 5796.

My role at Oakland Schools is to lead and support all areas of education from birth through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Prior to my current role, I was an elementary, middle and high school principal as well as a central office administrator.

As I work with our 28 superintendents and assistant superintendents, I see many reasons to support this bill.

First, there currently is not any consistent required training for all of the mandated reporters that interact with our students. Local districts provide training in an individualized manner, since there currently is not a training package that exists. These trainings typically occur at the beginning of the school year with new staff. This bill will create a training package from a high quality source that will be a tremendous resource for our districts. It can also be referenced throughout the year, rather than once a year for only new staff.

Second, the number of people who interact with our children in a school setting continues to grow each year as the number of opportunities grows within our state. The definition of a mandated reporter coupled with this bill to provide training, better ensures our students, staff and volunteers will have the necessary information to recognize and report suspected child abuse. Some of the additional areas that will now receive this training include: volunteers, co-curricular sponsors, 3<sup>rd</sup> party service providers, mentors, coaches, secretaries, para professionals, bus drivers, etc.

Finally, the bill provides the support without requiring a formulaic process for providing the training. The way the bill is written, local districts will be able to provide the training in a way that makes sense for their staff and school community. This flexibility is essential as our schools are required to do more and more trainings each year.

Again, I want to thank the committee for having us here today. It deeply saddens me and my fellow educators that we are facing the times and circumstances we are; however, these bills will provide additional support and structures to further ensure we are keeping our children safe in a world that is becoming more unsafe every day.

Thank you Chairman Kesto. I am happy to answer any questions you or the committee may have.